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**Folk-Islam in Maranao Society**

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Submitted to:

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## *Background of the Study*

Sometime during the beginning of the Spanish colonization of the Philippine archipelago, a violent eruption occurred within the borders of the Maguindanao Sultanate. Spanish chroniclers claimed that Sultan Kudarat, the reigning monarch at that time, was so frightened by this event that he ordered the sacrifice of several slaves.<sup>1</sup> To the untrained eye this event may only seem as a barbaric superstition conducted by pagans yet, the involvement of the Maguindanaoans - Muslims by profession of faith as the legacy of Shariff Kabungsuan - is quite a puzzling occurrence. Or is it?

There is a common misconception held by outsiders of the so-called *bangsamoro* regarding the cultural penetration of Islam in Southern Philippines. Certainly many are given the impression that the Muslim Filipinos of the South practiced and continues to practice an unadulterated and unchanging Islam that came from the time of the prophet Muhammad in contrast to Filipino Roman Catholicism which is often regarded as a syncretism of several native practices. Yet a thorough investigation of Muslim Filipinos, from the arrival of the Spanish to contemporary times, reveals that Filipino Islam is also prevalent in native animistic practices and beliefs similar to its Christian counterpart.

An anonymous chronicler in the Boxer Codex summarizes the Moros [Tagalogs] of Luzon as Muslims only by name yet, “in reality they are pagans and have customs and modes of living as the Bisayans...”<sup>2</sup> The Tagalogs indeed had a concept of a Supreme Being, *Bathalang*

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<sup>1</sup> Ghislaine Loyre, *General History of the Philippines Part VI Vol. I: Institutions of Maguindanao*, (Manila: Historical Conservation Society, 1991), 81.

<sup>2</sup> Isaac Donoso (ed), *Boxer Codex: a modern Spanish transcription and English translation of 16th-century exploration accounts of East and Southeast Asia and the Pacific*, trans by Ma. Luisa Garcia, Carlos Quirino, and Mauro Garcia, (Quezon City: Vibal Publishing, 2016), 63.

*Maykapal*, who is the creator of all things - probably a sign of Islamization within the Tagalog belief structure - yet it was also recorded that the Tagalogs still venerated numerous gods of fertility for agricultural and worldly concerns such as *Lakam-bakod*, the god of bountiful harvest, which was described as having a long phallus.<sup>3</sup>

Even the aforementioned Maguindanaoans are notorious of spirit veneration. Truly the Maguindanaoans kept the doctrine of *tawhid*, the Oneness of God, yet they do acknowledge the existence of lesser celestial beings - ancestral spirits, *jinns*, and harmful spirits - that must be appeased through offerings. A rather baffling aspect of Maguindanaoan Folk Islam is that offerings are also offered to the spirit *Iblis* [Satan], although this is done to appease it to prevent it from performing calamities rather than adoration or worship.<sup>4</sup>

The proponent may as well include other Islamic groups yet the main point is that the form of Islam practiced in Mindanao is Folk Islam, or the syncretization of local animistic elements and foreign Islamic elements that makes Islam in the Philippines, and even in its neighboring Southeast Asian neighbors, unique compared to their Arabized cousins in the Middle East. The purpose of this paper then is to study the Folk Islamic belief system harbored by the Maranao group in the Lanao Lake area due to the survival of many of their local literature, such as the *Darangen Epic*, that harbors both Islamic and animistic elements.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 63-65.

<sup>4</sup> Ghislaine Loyre, *Institutions of Maguindanao*, 72-73, 80-81.

## *Statement of the Problem*

The proponent will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What is Folk Islam?
  - 1.1.1. How does Cesar Majul percieve of the extra-Islamic practices incorporated in Islam, in the case of the Filipino Muslims in Mindanao?
  - 1.1.2. How does Cheertz explain the extra-Islamic practices incorporated in Islam, in the case of the Javanese?
  - 1.1.3. How does Abdullah Madale percieve of the extra-Islamic practices incorporated in Islam, in case of the Maranaos?
  - 1.1.4. How does Ambroding Baraiman percieve of the extra-Islamic practices incorporated in Islam, in case of the Maranaos??
2. How is the universe imagined by the Maranaos of old?
  - 2.1. How do the Maranaos envision the skyrealm?
  - 2.2. How do the Maranaos envision the earth?
  - 2.3. How do the Maranaos envision the underworld?
3. Who or what are the supernatural beings that occupy the Maranao universe?
  - 3.1. Who are the *tonong* according to contemporary Folk knowledge?
    - 3.1.1. Where can they be found?
    - 3.1.2. What are the rituals associated with such creatures?
    - 3.1.3. What are the Islamized elements in the *tonong* belief?
  - 3.2. What are the *naga* in Maranao beliefs?

- 3.2.1. How is it related to the image of the Sarimanok?
  - 3.3. What is the *Arimoanga*?
    - 3.3.1. How is it related to other moon-eaters in Philippine mythology?
  - 3.4. Who is God (Allah) in Maranao folk beliefs?
    - 3.4.1. Who are the angels in Maranao folk beliefs?
      - 3.4.1.1. How were the angels incorporated in Maranao folklore?
    - 3.4.2. Who are the *jinn*?
      - 3.4.2.1. How are they portrayed in orthodox Arabic folklore?
      - 3.4.2.2. How are they portrayed in Maranao folklore?
      - 3.4.2.3. How do they interact with the *tonong*?
- 4. How is the *tonong* characterized in pre-Islamic Maranao belief and tradition?
  - 4.1. How are the *tonong* characterized in the Darangen epics?
    - 4.1.1. Who are some of the prominent *tonongs* in the epics?
      - 4.1.1.1. What are their roles?
    - 4.1.2. How are the *tonong* related to the Maranao concept of magic?

## Defining Folk Islam

Scholars of Philippine studies are not unfamiliar with the concept of Folk Christianity or Folk Catholicism within a Filipino setting. To an outsider's point of view, what constitutes Folk Christianity in the Philippines is the syncretization of Christian dogma (mostly in the form of Roman Catholicism) and local system of beliefs and practices. One particular case of such syncretization between the two distinct systems is the Indigenization of the *Fall of Lucifer* myth which, in a Filipino setting, also explained the origins of the mysterious engkantos who are said to be fallen angels.<sup>5</sup> However within a believer's perspective, they regard themselves as "Christian" without finding any contradictions.

While the term "Folk Catholicism" has been used within academic circles in the study of indigenous Filipino Christian beliefs without much repercussion, the same for the term "Folk Islam" is not as easily viable in the study of extra-Islamic beliefs and practices that are outside the jurisdiction of the Quran and the Hadiths. A primary problem with the usage of Folk Islam in designating Islam in the Philippines is what Dr. Lars Ubaldo referred to as the "purification" of native practices to soothe its integration within the Islamic system. In short, the extra-Islamic practices of non-Arab Muslim groups, such as the Maranaos, may be designated as "Folk Islam" to an outsider, but to an insider of this syncretic system, there is no such thing as folk or fundamentalist Islam; all practices employed are all "authentic" Islamic practices regardless of local or Arab origin.

Peter Gowing defines Folk Islam as the "blending of normative beliefs and rites with pre-Islamic beliefs and customs, is found in Muslim communities throughout the World of

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<sup>5</sup> The proponent found traces of this syncretic myth in Batangas, Quezon Province, and Panay Island.

Islam.” He compared the concept of Folk Islam to the concept of Folk Christianity under the frameworks of (1) *Great and Little Traditions* and (2) *Indigenous Response*.<sup>6</sup>

The Great Tradition, of course, corresponds to Islamic customs and practices such as greetings (*Assalamu Alaikum*), dietary laws (prohibition of pork), and the concept of community (*ulama*). As for the Little Tradition, Gowing mentions the belief and veneration of supernatural spirits. Other observations include the concept of a folk-healer in the case of the *pamomolong*.<sup>7</sup> Gowing however observes that Filipino Folk Islam is under the threat of a new force, *Resurgent Islam*. This form of Islam, argued to have originated from trans-Arab nationalism and rise of education, led to the “new vitality of Islam” or the establishment of Islamic fundamentalism in Mindanao.<sup>8</sup>

Abdullah Madale, in his study of the Maranaos, define their religious practices as containing elements of a mythic world and Islamic history (theology), based on the Darangen epic.<sup>9</sup> Madale also observes the strong prolific nature of superstitions in Maranao society which he presumes comes from the lack of knowledge from certain phenomena or, to simply put, lack of education.<sup>10</sup> Madale agrees with the thesis statement of Groenveldt who refers to the extra-Islamic practices of the Maranaos as “paganic.” The full quote is as follows,

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Gordon Gowing, *Muslim Filipinos - Heritage and Horizon*, (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1979), 59.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 59-67.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 69-72.

<sup>9</sup> Abdullah T. Madale, *Maranaw: Dwellers of the Lake*, (Quezon City: Rex Printing Company, 1997), 49.

<sup>10</sup> Abdullah T. Madale, *Remarkable Maranaws*, (Quezon City: Omar Publishing, 1976), 7. Lanao del Sur accounts for the largest percentage of educational attainment in the ARMM (10.4% consists of college graduates). See Madale, *Maranaws: Dwellers of the Lake*, 29.

“They (Maranaws) seemed to have kept the religion of their pagan fathers and the bulk of the superstitions of their primitive forefathers and what they have now *isn’t pure Islamism* but the aggregate of past and present creeds.”<sup>11</sup>

Madale further inferred that while the “pagan” practices of the Maranaos still remain prominent, it is slowly being eradicated by the slow adoption of “knowledge” of Islamic consciousness.<sup>12</sup> In short, what the proponent would refer to as Folk Islam, Madale would simply refer to it as paganism in contrast to the “authentic” beliefs and tenets of Fundamentalist Islam.

Baraiman describes Islam as the main religion in Maranao society. However, he also recorded a syncretization of native beliefs that are not seen as contradictory or harmful to the Islamic system.<sup>13</sup> The concept of Folk Islam, therefore, initially do not exist within the Maranaos of Wao, Lanao del Sur. However, rather than mere syncretization - in which the two systems stand side by side as equals - there is a tendency in Maranao society to elevate the Islamic system. This is made explicit in one such ritual regarding the *inikadowa* or twin/guardian spirit of humans. After the ritualistic burying of such spirit - in the form of the placenta after a baby’s birth - psalms or *bang* would be offered to the *inikadowa* to teach it the ways of *agama* (religion, aka. Islam).<sup>14</sup> This then signifies that the *tonongs* or pre-Islamic spirits, similar to the once pagan

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<sup>11</sup> Madale, *Remarkable Maranaws*, 5-6.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Amroding Tauter Baraiman, *Kambarakat: Ang katutubong bisa sa buhay ng mga Maranaw sa Wao, Lanao del Sur*, (Manila: De La Salle University, 2018), 7.

<sup>14</sup> Amroding Tauter Baraiman, *Inikaduwa: Ang Kambal-Kaluluwa ng mga Maranaw sa Wao, Lanao del Sur*, (Manila: De La Salle University, 2019), 72-73.



jinns, are now incorporated into the Islamic duality of morality: a tonong may place itself under the will of God (Allah) or it may designate itself as an evil spirit.

Out of all the academic scholars presented by the proponent, Peter Gowing's definition of Folk Islam is the perfect definition an outsider can utilize in the designation of Filipino Islam in comparison to the fundamentalist Islam practiced in the Middle East. However it should be reiterated that the term Folk Islam is only a term that is utilized by outsiders. To a Muslim Maranao, at least prior to the late 20th century, there is no such thing as "pagan," "folk," or "fundamentalist," Islam: every religious aspect practiced by the Maranaos are, in their own definition, consistent with and part of the tenets of Islam. This is further made evident with the integration of Islamic elements in the Darangen epic, a pre-Islamic epic, itself. The introductory portion of *Kapmadali*, the third epic of the Darangen, is an invocation to God:

Maranao	English
Asalamo alaikom wa rakmatollah Hi wa barakato ho! Pitowaan aken so paekabatiya' Sa darangen a'i Ama'i Kabogatan Sa o ba aden a kaetoon iyan on A ribat na pakaontola niyan. <sup>15</sup>	May the Peace, Blessings, And Mercy of Allah be upon you! May I ask those who read this Darangen owned by the father of Kabogatan That if you find some errors in this work, Please correct them!

This may then be one of the earliest attempts to harmonize two distinct religio-cultural traditions in Maranao though, the mythological history based from the Darangen and the history of God and His prophets based from the Quran and the hadiths. Although the two systems may

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<sup>15</sup> Hadji Lawa Cali, *Darangen: in original Maranao verse, with English translation Vol. I*, (Marawi City: Folk Division, Mindanao State University), 93.

appear contradictory at first, they could easily be reconciled by simply grasping that these two histories could have happened at once from different settings. For example, while the archangel Gabriel was still conversing to the Prophet in the Arabian Peninsula, this does not necessarily contradict the idea that the events of the Darangen are simultaneously occurring in Mindanao. This is further supported that, according to Maranao traditions, these two legendary histories would later converge with the coming of Islam in Mindanao.

According to the last section of the *Radia Indarapatra*<sup>16</sup> epic, the historic arrival of Sharif Kabungsuwan ushered in the proliferation of Islam in Mindanao however the religion would still remain unaccepted by the people of Bembaran, and as punishment was “enchanted.” Only three men would avoided being “enchanted,” and it is from their bloodline would modern Maranao royalties claim their origins from.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The legendary ancestor of the heroes of the Darangen and the Maranao people.

<sup>17</sup> Damiana L. Eugenio, *Philippine Folk Literature: The Epics*, (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2018), 385.

## Maranao Cosmology

The universe, according to Maranao Folk Islamic viewpoint, is a multi-layered world<sup>18</sup> inhabited not only by humans but also by supernatural and divine beings either of animistic or Islamic origin. The composition of the Maranao universe does not differ much from the cosmology of its animistic neighbors, such as the Bisayans, in the sense that it is primarily composed of three main areas: (1) the Skyworld or *Daridayan a Langit*, (2) the Earth, and (3) the Underworld. Each of these areas, especially the first two, are also said to include their own sub-layers.

The Skyworld is inhabited by the *tonong*, divine spirits who often aid heroes of the Darangen epic, and personified forms of the celestial spheres such as the Sun and the Moon. Islamic elements become apparent with the inclusion of God (Allah), angels, and houris, as inhabitants of this realm. Sub-regions of this realm include the *Antar a Langit*, a region just above the clouds, and *Aloyanan a Gabon*, a moving region within the clouds. An important site in the Skyrealm is the *Dimalapang Dimasar*, a magical river that grants innumerable powers to those who bathe in its waters.<sup>19</sup> Another region is located in the atmosphere which serves as a buffer zone between the Skyworld and the Earth which is inhabited by jinns. This region is called the *Oraonan a Lantoy*, known for possessing a garden of flowers and vegetables.<sup>20</sup> Jinns and blessed heroes may enter the upper Skyrealm through a rainbow bridge. Another region is

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<sup>18</sup> Madale describes the Maranao universe as “neither flat nor round,” but is shaped like “a cushion made up of several layers.” See Madale, *The Remarkable Maranaws*, 8.

<sup>19</sup> Hadji Lawa Cali, *Darangen Vol. I*, 225.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

the *Magoyeda a Selegen*, the abode of the princess-goddess *Walain sa Letingan*.<sup>21</sup> Another unspecified section is called *Sorga* heaven, taken from the Sanskrit term *Surga*, where children who died prematurely would go and turn into *papanok sa aras* (birds of paradise).

Later Islamic influences led to the addition of the Islamic Heaven, the abode of God (Allah) and his angels, atop the seventh and highest layer of the sky. Maranao beliefs state that this is the resting place of the saintly and righteous ones where they forever live in eternal pleasure and eternal health. Men especially are rewarded by the companionship of *houris*, heavenly maidens blessed with eternal beauty and perpetual virginity.<sup>22</sup>

The Earth is the world of humans and other earthly tonongs. The latter mostly live in *nonoks* (balete tree),<sup>23</sup> although reports of tonongs inhabiting the sea are not uncommon. Places of interest within this region are those inhabited by the Darangen heroes such as the three main kingdoms: (1) *Iliyan a Bembaran*, (2) *Kaibat a Kadaan*, and (3) *Gindolongan Marogong*. The first kingdom was ruled by semi-divine hero *Diwata Ndaw Gibon* and his kin, and is a favored abode by the tonong adding to its prestige. The second kingdom serves as the rival of Bembaran and is ruled by Gibon's younger brother *Awilawil o Ndaw*.<sup>24</sup> The third kingdom was ruled by another of Gibon's brother, *Dalondong a Mimbantas*. The kingdom is known for possessing the enchanted river *Pagayawan* that refuses to flow without the presence of thunder.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Dante L. Ambrosio, *Balatik: Etnoastronomiya, Kalangitan sa Kabihasnang Pilipino*, (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2013), 65.

<sup>22</sup> Madale, *The Remarkable Maranaws*, 9.

<sup>23</sup> Hadji Cali, *Darangen Vol. I*, 226.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

According to Maranao legends, the earth is carried by a large, unspecified, animal called the *lumpang* accompanied by a small shrimp that sometimes claws on the earth-holder from time to time, causing the phenomena of earthquakes.<sup>26</sup>

The Maranaos also held a belief in the Underworld as an abode of the dead although details of the place in the Darangen is often vague and short. The *Kambembaran* epic, the second episode of the Darangen, shortly references the underworld in the following manner after the death of the hero *Tominaman sa Rogong*, the firstborn son of Gibon.

Maranao	English
Na go den pagalin alin Si Tominaman sa Rogong Na maliwanag so kaneg Na mipaentar so makelok Na landap den so kailay Na kabantayan iyan den A dalinan a sonoran A dadalendegan o taw Na inendodan iyan den A bandaran a karegan A randangan a ngganatan... <sup>27</sup>  ...Na pendalendeg so lotang Ka kagiya ipetaelas Si Tominaman sa Rogong Ka kiyaranda' ko lopa. <sup>28</sup>	Soon they saw a strange change that came On Tominaman sa Rogong: His hearing, it seemed, became keen And his sight sharpened, and he saw The universe plainly, and more, For now he saw very clearly The awesome <i>Abode of the Dead</i> Where he found a great multitude Whom he passed by as he entered The great shining city which all Must know as the World Hereafter...  ...And the thunderous cannons bursts That were fired in honor of the dead King Tominaman sa Rogong On his return to <i>primal earth</i> .

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<sup>26</sup> Abdullah Madale, *Maranaw: Dwellers of the Lake*, (Quezon City: Rex Publishing Company, 1997), 52.

<sup>27</sup> Hadji Cali, *Darangen Vol. I.*, 78.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

The adoption of Islam within Maranao society also led to a Maranao adaption of the *Jahannam* or Islamic conception of Hell. It is described as a dark and dirty hole in the bowels of the earth and Madale implies that the Maranao Hell also consists of multiple layers based on the sins similar to, or far frightening than, the narrative of Dante's *Inferno*. Some notable inhabitants of these realms are extra-marital couples, who are forced to feed on their illegitimate children, and disrespectful children who are imprisoned in the belly of a monster called *sakar*.<sup>29</sup>

### **Darangen Epic**

Further studies regarding the Maranao Folk Islamic belief cannot be fully understood without first conducting a study of their national epic. The *Darangen* is a collection of 17 smaller epics, boasting an approximate collection of 72,000 lines, regarding the legendary history of the Maranao people through the lense of the life and death, and bloodline succession. The *Darangen* could be regarded as a poetic genealogy of Maranao heroes, beginning with *Diwata Ndaw Gibon* and ending with his descendant *Bantugen*. The *Darangen* is claimed to be of pre-Islamic origin due to the presence of archaic words and references to ancient weapons, such as the *kampilan*.<sup>30</sup> Due to the limitation of research materials, the proponent will only be able to provide detailed synopsis of sub-epics from the first four volumes from the seven main volumes.

Due to the length of the entire *Darangen* tradition, the proponent will provide only a summary of the three epics within the first volume:

1. Panganay Kiyandato o Diwata Ndaw Gibon sa Iliyan a Bembaran

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<sup>29</sup> Madale, *The Remarkable Maranaws*, 8.

<sup>30</sup> Damiana L. Eugenio, *The Epics*, 393.

2. Kabembaran

3. Kapmadali

*Panganay Kiyandato o Diwata Ndaw Gibon sa Iliyan a Bembaran*

The epic begins with the introduction of *Diwata Ndaw Gibon*, the ruler of Bembaran, one of the major kingdoms of the Darangen cycle. He laments that he remains a bachelor as he grows old, prompting him to search for a wife. He travels by sea, through a magical boat, and eventually marries the woman *Aya Panganay Bai* from a place called Minango'aw a Ronong.

He stays in her land for a while, becoming a father of two in the process, but later becomes homesick for his native Bembaran. After arriving back, Gibon observes that his kingdom was underpopulated prompting him to ask permission to Panganay Bai if he could marry from other lands in the prospect of increasing the population. His wife was offended at first but, after being reassured that she shall remain as head-wife, consents for Gibon's polygamous affair. In the course of his travels, he marries five more times and sires a total of five daughters, one each from his new wives.

Eventually Gibon grows old and dies. Shortly after, Panganay Bai requests her sons that she may return to her homeland as she senses her death to be approaching. Her request was granted and she eventually dies as well from sickness. The epic ends with a funeral for husband and wife and the coronation of *Tominaman a Rogong*, their firstborn son as the next ruler of Bembaran.

### *Kabembaran*

Rogong, along with his brother *Magondaya' Boisan*, expands the territory of their late father often through the settlement of subordinate leaders in various discovered areas during travel. Rogong eventually grows old and dies, descending to the city of the dead below the earth. Rogong is succeeded by his sons *Pasandalan a Rogong* and *Bantugen*.

### *Kapmadali*

The story begins when the hero *Ladalad a Madali* - the son of Boisan, the second son of Gibon - awakens and discovers that Bemberan had become a ghost town. He met with his two female cousins, the sisters of the hero *Bantugen*, who tells him reluctantly what had occurred: it is said that the Bantugen was kidnapped by some rouge tonong (spirit), prompting the datus of the kingdom to retrieve him only to instead be imprisoned under an enchanted boulder in the land of *Danalima' a Rogong*, by the enchantress *Walain Pirimbangan*.

Madali immediately embarks on a quest to save his kinsmen only to be halted by a giant crocodile. Madali and the beast battle for many days until the hero emerged victorious. The crocodile then reveals his identity as *Pinatoli i Kilid*, the guardian spirit of his grandfather Gibon who gives him helpful advice for the quest. Upon entering into enemy territory, Madali single-handedly battles against the forces of Pirimbangan. With his *kampilan* and shield - as well as the blessing of invisibility from his spirit guides - he kills almost all the inhabitants of *Danalima' a Rogong*, save for those who fled to the mountains.

Afterwards, Madali and Pirimbangan conduct a battle of magic through the help of their respective tonongs but the hero of Bemberan stands victorious while his enemy retreats to her



*torogan* (royal house). Pirimbangan then called upon the crocodile spirit *Magolaing sa Ragat* for aid. Madali retaliates by calling upon *Pinatoli i Kilid* for aid. The two beasts fight for a few days until Pinatoli wins and demands a woman, to be offered to his master Madali, as compensation; the loser complies.

Desperate, Pirimbangan orders an assistant to ascend to the skyrealm and retrieve a powerful amulet, that gives the wielder dominion over all existing *tonong* spirits, from the goddess *Walain Katolosan*. Madali takes notice of this plan and intercepts it by shape-shifting into the woman assistant, reaching to the skyrealm first, and stealing the amulet from the goddess.

Meanwhile as such events are taking place, the story shifts to the missing hero Bantogen who is revealed to be within one of the regions of the skyrealm who went missing after courting the goddess *Walain sa Lekepen*. After learning the events that are taking place, he descends to Danalima, a Rogong and fights with Madali for a while, under the pretense that they could not recognize each other. When they did recognize each other, they stopped fighting and freed their kinsmen from their prison. The epic ends as the heroes sail back to their native Bemberan.

## Supernatural Entities in Maranao Folklore

### *Tonong*

A tonong is a general term to refer to divine or semi-divine spirits that inhabits almost, if not all, regions of the Maranao universe specifically on the skyrealm, balete trees, and bodies of water. If applied to Folk Catholic terms, the closest equivalence of the tonong is the Panay-Bukidnon terms *diwata* or *diya* or the more familiar *engkantu* that encompass sky-spirits (langitnon), earth-spirits (lupa-on), sea-spirits (tubignon), and underworld-spirits (idadalmunon).<sup>31</sup>

Madale identifies four classifications of tonongs within the belief of the Maranaos as of the late 90s. These included (1) *apo*, or tornado spirits, (2) *sakit*, or harmful spirits responsible for diseases, (3) *saitan*, or possessing spirits, and (4) *inikadowa*, or the spirit double of a person. The apo and the inikadowa are considered benign, while the sakit and the saitan are considered malignant in nature.<sup>32</sup>

The apo are ancestral spirits, in the form of tornados or watersprouts, who are tasked to kill or drive away evil spirits and, in case of approaching calamities from these spirits, one only needs to remind them of their duty. To do so, a person must burn some orange leaves while chanting the phrase: *Apo, kilala a kaming ka ka kaanak kamingka* (Recognize us, apo [ancestor], for we are your relatives).<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See F. Landa Jocano, *The epic of Labaw Donggon*, (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1965) and Alicia Magos, *The Enduring Ma-aram Tradition: An Ethnography of a Kinaray-a Village in Antique*, (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1992).

<sup>32</sup> Madale, *The Remarkable Maranaws*, 5.

<sup>33</sup> Madale, *Maranaw: Dwellers of the Lake*, 60.

The sakit are, as the name implies, spirits responsible for causing illnesses. A common method of dealing with illnesses is through the ritual called the *pulakayogan sa manok*. The ritual itself is quite simple and is done in the following steps: (1) release a chicken with yellow beak and yellow legs under a balete tree and (2) offer some food offerings on the tree's roots. This ritual aims to appease the disease-causing spirit so that it may lift the curse inflicted on its victim.<sup>34</sup>

The saitan is an evil spirit evidently of Islamic origin. In Islamic traditions, saitans correspond to the Judeo-Christian idea of devils or demons, who are said to tempt mankind into sin. A passage from the Quran mentions them as such,

“And thus We have made for every prophet an enemy - devils (*shaitan*) from mankind and jinn, inspiring to one another decorative speech in delusion. But if your Lord had willed, they would not have done it, so leave them and that which they invent.”<sup>35</sup>

In Maranao tradition however, similar to the Javanese (Abangan), the saitan are said to have the capability of possessing humans. A ritual, called the *miyakasper sa saitan*, is a specific countermeasure for such cases of demonic possessions. A folk-healer (*pamomolong*) begins the ritual by rubbing scented oil on the body of a possessed person while reciting incantations, called *mayaw a da-a*, which burns the possessing spirit. Similar to Christian exorcisms, the healer may ask of the identity and reasoning of the saitan for possessing the body, but it mostly ends with the healer ultimately expelling the spirit from its victim.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>35</sup> Surah 6:112, Sahih International.

<sup>36</sup> Madale, *Maranaws: Dwellers of the Lake*, 55.

The inikadowa is a twin-spirit that accompanies a human child when the latter is born. It is believed that the placenta (*inaianan a wata*) is actually the manifestation of the inikadowa and it is a common practice to bury it under a tree before dawn. The ritualistic burying of the placenta under a tree aims to empower the child with health and success. Treasures, such as money, will also be buried alongside the placenta to avoid unwanted jealousy of the inikadowa and its human counterpart. The following invocation is also employed as a reminder to the twin-spirit,

“This is your portion of your father and mother; as such, do not disturb your (human) twin, do not fight him.”<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, it is believed that the umbilical cord represents the familial connection and kinship between the human child and the inikadowa. Infant illnesses are linked to the disruption or disturbance with the inikadowa; spiritual reconciliation requires another form of chicken ritual. The ritual involves the nurturing of a *lomsed*, a rooster with yellow beak, feet, and white feathers. Symbolically, the chicken represents the boundary between day and night in the way they crow; day represents the time of mankind while night represents the time of the spirits. As such, the rooster’s role as the dawn-breaker is the symbolical mediator between the two forces.<sup>38</sup>

Due to Islamic adoption by the Maranaos, the inikaduwa has also been associated in the belief of Judgement Day. It is said that when a person is judged during the Day of Judgement, his

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<sup>37</sup> Amroding Baraiman, *Inikaduwa*, 72.

<sup>38</sup> Nagasura T. Madale, “Myth, Symbolism and National Unity: The Case of the Sarimanok,” *Mindanao Journal* vol. 4 no. 1-4, (n.d.), 159.

inikaduwa will be his spiritual defense attorney. However if the aforementioned burying rituals were not performed, the inikaduwa will be a person's accuser in the Day of Judgement.<sup>39</sup>

### *Naga*

A *naga*, according to Hindu definition refers generally to snakes or serpents, particularly cobras which, due to the pantheistic nature of the Hindu religion, is often revered as divine protectors. Johnson relates that "actual snakes are indistinguishable from their mythological counterparts, since the former may be considered the guise in which the latter show themselves to humans." Johnson adds that an additional religious role of the naga includes fertility - in the form of a naga stone that is placed beneath a tree and acts as a fertility shrine for women - and guardians of mineral deposits.<sup>40</sup> A relevant naga figure in Hinduism is *Ananta*, a seven-headed serpent that acts as Vishnu's mound during the age of creation.<sup>41</sup>

Scant references to such creature in Maranao folklore indicates the proliferation and adaptation of Hindu ideas within Maranao society prior to the coming of Islam. The Maranaos possibly adopted the Javanese and Malay terminology of the naga that connotes the modern perception of 'dragon.'<sup>42</sup> The naga is a famous subject of both Hindu and Southeast Asian art with a subset motif called the *kirtti-mukha* (glorious face, denoting monster-headed aquatic

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<sup>39</sup> Amroding Baraiman, *Inikaduwa*, 73.

<sup>40</sup> W.J. Johnson, *A Dictionary of Hinduism: First Edition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 212-213.

<sup>41</sup> Margaret and James Stutley, *A Dictionary of Hinduism: Its Mythology, Folklore, and Development 1500 BC - AD 1500*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1977), 198.

<sup>42</sup> Juan R. Francisco, "The Naga design in Southeast Asian Art." *Mindanao Journal* vol. 14, nos. 1-4 (1988): 165.

creatures) which is inferred to have been the basis of the *sarimanok*.<sup>43</sup> Yet there may be a distinction between the two within Maranao terminology. In Maranao art, the naga is represented by the *panolong* or okir that surrounds the *torogan* (royal house). The mythological significance of the okir relates to the belief that a huge naga encircles the whole world, similar to the Norse *Jormungandr*, as well as the belief that the naga serves as a repellent of evil spirits because the latter worships the former.<sup>44</sup>

### *Arimaonga*

The Arimaonga is described by contemporary Maranao accounts to be a giant lion who is the primary cause of lunar eclipses. To rid the moon from the beast, the Maranaos would create some noise and shout, “*Arimaonga, boka ingka so olan kambangkiten o doniya* (Lion, release the moon or the world shall come to an end!)”<sup>45</sup> The concept of the moon-eater is not unique to the Maranaos but is instead a collective belief within the archipelago. The moon-eater of the Tagalogs was called *Laho*, a giant serpent - whose name is known today in the Tagalog language as ‘to vanish’ - that originated from the Hindu demon *Rahu* who is also claimed to be causing both lunar and solar eclipses. The Bisayan moon-eater is also described as a giant serpent under the name *Bakunawa*.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 176-178.

<sup>44</sup> Nagasura Madale, “Myth, Symbolism and National Unity,” 156-157.

<sup>45</sup> Madale, *The Maranaws*, 52.

<sup>46</sup> Dante Ambrosio, *Balatik*, 138-139.

The Tagalog and Bisayan moon-eaters may also be connected to the aforementioned naga, yet the Maranao moon-eater is quite peculiar and strange in terms of form. Lions are not endemic in the archipelago suggesting that this form of the Arimaonga is a later Hindu or Islamic influence. A far more primitive form of the Arimaonga, from animistic Maranao society, may have been a civet cat based on the Austronesian term *qari-maqun*.<sup>47</sup>

### *God (Allah)*

The belief in a Supreme Being may have predated the coming of Islam since another name is used by the Maranaos other than Allah: *Tohan*. Maranao theology does not seem to deviate from the orthodox Islamic characterization of God. The *Kapmali* epic invocation describes Him as perfect and no defect,

Maranao	English
Sa o ba aden a kaetoon iyan on A ribat na pakaontola niyan. Ka sabap sa aya bo'a di' Kaeribat na so Allahotaala, Go da'a paawing iyan ka da' A salakaw a misorat on A rowar raken.	That if you find some errors in his work, please correct them! For no one in this world is perfect, Except for Allah who has no defect, While the one who made this copy, The one who wrote it down, Is just a man, myself. <sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>48</sup> Hadji Cali, *Darangen Vol. I*, 93.

God is unique and eternal,

Maranao	English
Na tabiya' ko Da' Paeyag A salebo' da'ngarimbang A pepaengadapen o taw Sa karilabon diyaril. <sup>49</sup>	I ask pardon from the Unseen The One Incomparable God Who grants blessings to every man At all times till eternity.

However Maranao theology is uniquely in the way that they do not strictly adhere to monotheism as stated in the *Shahada*, “There is no god but God (Allah)...”<sup>50</sup> Folk Islamic Maranao theology could be described instead as henotheistic, the worship and exaltation of a single God without necessarily denying the existence of other gods. This is supported by the historic belief of the Maranaos to the heavenly *tonongs* who are regarded as divine or semi-divine; they only differ from God due to their anthropomorphic bodies while God is without form.

God is also viewed as the cause of calamities, such as earthquakes and pestilence, as an expression of His wrath or displeasure upon the Maranaos, probably due to sin. In line with the belief in earthquakes, there is a supposed superstition amongst the Maranaos that reciting “*Sobhana Allah. Sobhana Allah.* (God is greatest. God is greatest.)” would stop an earthquake.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Surah 37:35.

<sup>51</sup> Madale, *The Maranaws*, 59-61.



## *Angels*

Orthodox Islamic theology, adopted by the Maranaos, acknowledge the existence of angels and is regarded as one of the articles of faith as stated in the following surah,

The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and [so have] the believers. All of them have believed in Allah and *His angels* and His books and His messengers, [saying], "We make no distinction between any of His messengers." And they say, "We hear and we obey. [We seek] Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the [final] destination."<sup>52</sup>

Islamic tradition acknowledges four archangels - Gabriel (*Djibril*), Michael (*Mikhail*), Raphael (*Israfil*), and *Azrail* (the angel of death) - although only the first two are explicitly mentioned in the Quran.<sup>53</sup> Gabriel is placed in special honor due to his role as the revealer of God's message to Mohammed.<sup>54</sup> This special honor given to Gabriel will extend to the Maranaos as evidenced by the founding legend of Lanao Lake.

According to legend, the area of Lanao lake used to be a sultanate called Mantapoli within the eastern region of the world, ruled by the great grandfather of the hero Indarapatra. The population of Mantapoli grew than its western neighbors of the world that, if left unchecked, may cause a major catastrophe. The archangel Gabriel reports this to God, who orders him to gather an army of angels from the seven-regions of the underworld and the seven-regions of heaven. God then caused a solar eclipse, in which the angelic myriad swooped in and carried off the land of Mantapoli like a carpet and brought it to the center of the world. The dugged up area

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<sup>52</sup> Surah 2:285.

<sup>53</sup> Surah 2:98.

<sup>54</sup> Reza Aslan, *No god but God: The Origin, Evolution, and Future of Islam*, 34-35.

then became the present location of Lanao Lake. However, when the water of Lanao Lake began to overflow and turn into an ocean, God ordered Gabriel to gather the four winds of the world and create an outlet to let the excess water flow to a different water source. A legendary effect of this deed resulted in the creation of what is referred to now as the Maria Cristina falls.<sup>55</sup>

Gabriel once more is referenced in Maranao folklore through a brief appearance in the *Maharadia Lawana*, a localized version of the Hindu *Ramayana* epic which evidently adopted Islamic features. The first phase of the story begins when Maharadia Lawana, a man with eight heads, was banished by his sultan father by setting him to a raft into the open oceans as punishment because of his bad tongue. Upon reaching a place called Pulu Nagara, he tries to kill himself by attempting to jump on a pyre. The archangel Gabriel, under the orders of God, appeared to him and revealed to him that if he ceases to kill himself through burning, he will not be killed unless by a weapon sharpened by a whetstone from his native home of Bandiarmasir. When Maharadia Lawana embarks to the open seas again, the winds drift him back to his native land where his father no longer wished to punish him.<sup>56</sup>

Another angelic figure common within Maranao folklore is *Malakal Maut*, the Angel of Death and another name for Azrail. According to Maranao eschatology, the length of every human's life, even that of the Prophet Muhammad, has been predetermined and recorded on the leaves of *Sadiarathul Montaha*, a tree perched in the Sorga Heaven. When a leaf falls off the tree's branches, Malakal Maut would wait for three to seven days before taking the soul of the

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<sup>55</sup> Abdullah Madale, *The Maranaws*, 19-21.

<sup>56</sup> Mamitua Saber, "Maharadia Lawana: Text and Translation," *Mindanao Journal* vol. 14, nos. 1-4 (1988): 109-111.

person.<sup>57</sup> Makalak Maut may appear as a grotesque figure or as a handsome prince depending if the dying person is either a sinner or a virtuous man respectively. If found a sinner, the soul will be punished by the Angel of Death continuously in hell until the Final Judgement where he will have the opportunity to reach salvation. If however found a virtuous man, then the Angel of Death will hoist him up to heaven.<sup>58</sup>

A Maranao *kissah* (religious story) also relates how Malakal Maut descended and took the soul of the Virgin Mary while Jesus - implied to be during his pre-missionary years - was gathering firewood. Mary begged the Angel of Death to allow her to die lying down on her bed to make it seem as if she was sleeping; a request the Angel grants. Jesus soon learns of this and begs God to talk to his mother even for a short while. God allows Mary to return to life in which both mother and son each tell their sorrowful goodbyes. The story seems to give an apocryphal explanation on how the Islamic Jesus, in contrast to his Christian counterpart, is able to talk to the dead.<sup>59</sup>

Minor angels are also frequent in Maranao folklore. It is said that some angels serve as charioteers to the Sun and the Moon who are described in anthropomorphic forms as a flaming young man and a beautiful young woman respectively.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Nagasura Madale, "Myth, Symbolism and National Unity," 162-163.

<sup>58</sup> Nagasura Madale, *The Maranaws*, 44, 47-48.

<sup>59</sup> Nagasura Madale, *Tales from Lake Lanao and other essays*, 119-120.

<sup>60</sup> Nagasura Madale, *The Maranaws*, 52.

## *Jinns*

Jinns are spirits of Arabian folklore that predates the advent of Islam. In pre-Islamic Arabian religion, the jinns acted as intercessors of the *kahins* (pagan priests) for man to communicate with the pagan gods of Arabia, save for Allah who was regarded as inaccessible and impersonal.<sup>61</sup> Jinns are described by the Quran as having free-will to choose good and evil. Some jinns, for example, heard the message of Muhammed and listened as immortalized in the following verses,

Say: “It has been revealed to me that a company of Jinns listened (to the Qur’an). They said, ‘We have really heard a wonderful Recital! It gives guidance to the Right, and we have believed therein. We shall not join (in worship) any (gods) with the Lord.’”<sup>62</sup>

However there are also some jinns who had chosen to do evil in the eyes of God. One such evil jinn is Iblis, the Islamic equivalent of the Christian Devil.

Behold! We said to the angels, “Bow down to Adam.” They bowed down except Iblis (Satan). *He was one of the Jinns*, and he broke the Commandment of the Lord. Will you then take him and his progeny as protectors rather than Me? And they are enemies of you! Evil would be the exchange for wrong-doers!<sup>63</sup>

While God created man through clay and mud, the jinn were created through “the fire of a scorching wind.”<sup>64</sup> Jinns are also described as having limited powers in comparison to God,<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Reza Aslan, *No god but God*, 7-9.

<sup>62</sup> Surah 72: 1-2.

<sup>63</sup> Surah 18:50.

<sup>64</sup> Surah 15:26-27.

even at times under the dominion of the Prophet Solomon.<sup>66</sup> Yet Arabic literature during the Middle Ages perceive certain jinns as possessing near omnipotence, having the ability to grant any wishes or requests their masters bid them. These jinns are the familiar *genies* known by western culture who are imprisoned in magic lamps, although other paraphernalias exist that may contain jinns such as magic rings with an engraved Name of God and bottles with lids engraved with the Seal of Solomon.<sup>67</sup>

The belief in jinns is evident in Maranao society that it had also penetrated the native cosmology, as well as local literature such as the *Darangen*. As aforementioned above, the jinns reside in the atmospheric region between the earth and the skyrealm. They are viewed as distinct from the heavenly tonongs. It is possible for a jinn to intermarry and reproduce offsprings with humans and tonongs. Gibon, for example, possesses both jinn and tonong blood due to his legendary ancestry. His father, *Aya Diwata Mokom sa Kaadiong a Lopa*, himself is half-tonong and half-human, while his mother, *Daromoyod a Olan*, is a half-jinn and half-human.<sup>68</sup> Jinns are also described as invisible to the human eye, punishers of evil-doers either through illness or beatings, and devourers of animal flesh and bones, as well as crops.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Surah 55:33-35.

<sup>66</sup> Surah 34:12; 27:17, 27-29; 38:37-38.

<sup>67</sup> Tales involving jinns in the Arabian Nights include: (1) *The Fisherman and the Jinni*, (2) *Aladdin and the Enchanted Lamp*, and (3) *the Tale of Ma'aruf the Cobbler*. See *Tales from the Thousand and One Nights*, trans by N.J. Dawood, (London: Penguin Books, 1973).

<sup>68</sup> Hadji Cali, *Darangen Vol. I*, 63.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

### Pre-Islamic Concept of the Tonong

The above entry regarding the tonong displayed a mixture of animistic and Islamic elements that are intertwined. The tonong of the Folk Maranaos were divided into four main classes: apo, sakit, saitan, and inikadowa. The Darangen, a bastion of the old pre-Islamic culture of the Maranaos, however features other classes of spirits unmentioned by Madale which holds certain important connections within the pre-Islamic Maranao magic system and Maranao ethics and morality system.

Within the four classes mentioned by Madale, the apo and the inikadowa is the most prominent within the epics. Interestingly enough, the tonongs of the Darangen can be two classes of spirits at once. One such tonong is *Pinatola' a Tonong*, an inikadowa and guardian spirit of the hero Diwata Ndaw Gibon. Pinatola is a crocodile spirit that can shapeshift depending to his terrain: (1) he can assume the form of a crocodile in sea, a form he will later appear in the *Kapmadali* epic, (2) he can assume the form of the *garuda* - revealing Hindu elements in folk beliefs - in the air and (3) he can assume the form of a giant on land.<sup>70</sup> The *Panganay Kiyandato* epic speaks briefly of the terrible power of this tonong,

Maranao	English
Ka pepaengandamen a taw So Pinatola' a Tonong A rapiyag a Ayonan Sa kiyapelombaya on. <sup>71</sup>	But no visitor came [in Bemberan], Scared of Pinatola a Tonong The much dreaded twin-spirit there Of the Ayonan [Gibon], born with him.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 22.

According to Madale, Pinatola is the apo [ancestor] of all unseen benevolent spirits that the Maranaos invoked in various rituals.<sup>72</sup> Strangely enough, although Pinatola is regarded as the ancestor of unseen spirits, the Darangen characterizes him as a visible spirit who even fought against the hero Kapmadali when the latter did not recognize the former, who in reality is the hero's ancestral spirit. The brother of Gibon, *Awilawil o Ndaw*, also possess a powerful tonong called *Salindagaw Masingir* who acts as a guardian-spirit of his kingdom.

Maranao	English
Na isa mambo' ka mareg Ka may ka so Kadaan Na pamaloy da' matondog Ka bagiyaw da' mapeneng Ka reges da' ka' alangi Ka miyangondaya ko ig Ka tominindeg a kadeg A giid magindagindag Ko miyakambala'bala Ka da' maako sagadan O malo' marangka ndaw Ka ipekagila o taw So Salindagaw Masingir A rapiyag o Ayonan So kiyapelombaya on... <sup>73</sup>	This place was also set apart From others, because Kadaan Was guarded by a great tonong Making it strong as a typhoon Or a swift current none can stop Whose waters inundate the land; Or like a huge pillar of fire Whose flames sway high encircling and Indeed securing the kingdom; For no one dared pass this furnace, As fiery as the noon-day sun, Since people there were much afraid Of Salindagaw Masingir The twin-spirit of the ruler, Given to him when he was born...

A unique class of tonong in the epics are the *tolos*, tonongs who inhabit the skyrealm. It is evident that these spirits are an object of pre-Islamic veneration and worship. In the *Kapmadali*

<sup>72</sup> Nagasura Madale, "Myth, Symbolism and National Unity: The Case of the Sarimanok," 158.

<sup>73</sup> Hadji Cali, *Darangen Vol. I*, 67.

epic, the third episode of the Darangen, the cousins of the hero *Ladalad a Madali* imparts the following message before his adventure quest,

Maranao	English
Na paengenin ta sa <i>tolos</i> A seka den i mipantaw A ipamanay a tonong Sa ndoronan a temowan. <sup>74</sup>	“Let us pray to all the spirits That you will win all your battles With the help of all our tonong In the bloody field of combat.”

Madali responds by offering a prayer of his own, that also acts as a magical oration, to the heavenly tonongs to protect his cousins from harm before leaving to fulfill his quest,

Maranao	English
A taewag ako sa tonong Na aya ko den taewagan So Diwata ko sa Magaw A Mino’aw a Minepen A Tominoray ko Langit A apay o pantonen on...	“I call on you, all our tonong, Indeed, I especially call The strong Spirit of Destruction, O Mino’aw a Minepen, Powerful Spirit in the sky, From whom I can ask anything...
...Na go ped a taewagen ko So diwata lalaminen Ko sa pasagi’ko ragat Ka seka so pisaeyanan A ba bo’ pimbaod baod Ko ilidan pagayaon.	...And now I also call on you, O Spirits there in the tower, With power over the sea, For you are Spirits assigned To serve as guards of all these Regions found around the whole sea.
...Na tarokon ka sa tig ko... ...Na dakara niyo raken So salawo’ magaganday A tambinaga ko langit... ...Na panongkopa niyo ron	...Please come down and be at my call... ...Bring down to me from the skyworld The decorated flying chair Used for travelling in the sky... ...Please place on this magic chair,

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 109.



So manga olan a ba'i Sa makayang a laminan Na balona niyo mowit Ko mitorogan a gabon Na taman sa di' makagid. <sup>75</sup>	Our two beautiful princesses Who live in the high tower here And take them up there in the sky, Hide them in the thick clouds and keep Them there until I have returned.
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The heroes of the Darangen also believe in the inevitability of fate as decreed by the tolos such as the case when Madali thought that he would certainly die from his first encounter with a crocodile spirit.

Maranao	English
Na metae den sa dar iyan A ala anda manaya Na soratan ta so <i>tolos</i> A di' pekaewayan a taw A ginawa ko Madali' Sa Iliyan a Bembaran. <sup>76</sup>	He tried to reassure himself And said, "Ah, never mind, this is My fate as decreed by the <i>gods</i> , I shall not become an old man, I myself, Madali, or live In Iliyan a Bembaran."

The epics make it clear that the will of the tonong is almost, if not entirely, absolute and cannot be stopped or changed by human intervention such as the case of Walain Primbangan in the Kapmadali epic, when the tonongs decreed that she must not see what was happening in the battlefield within her torogan,

Maranao	English
Na kawayay' den a tonong A da' a kiyabantayan	Because the <i>tonong had willed that</i> She would not be able to see

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 110-111.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 113.

Sa pakabatal a inged A ba bo' kanakan sawang A babago miyakagid A paegiri sa bansa Sa Iliyan a Bembaran. <sup>77</sup>	Anyone in the whole place, not Even a little boy, she did Not see any new arrival As rumored, who had come to fight For Iliyan a Bembaran.
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The tolos, or the tonongs in general, are also regarded as the provider of magical powers since the main source of magic, the heavenly river Dimalapang Dimasar, is within their dominion. Oftentimes anting-antings or amulets are regarded as given by the tonongs, and may even house a tonong itself to provide extra effects. The hero Madali for example is described of possessing the following amulet,

Maranao	English
Na go niyan bo' geena A sambakorong a wato A adimat a langgadan A pandaag a pemengang A pamalenggen a tonong A tominoray ko lanigt. <sup>78</sup>	Next he picked up a thin wafer Of stone, a precious one, it was Quite enchanted, an amulet Which protected well the wearer From danger, <i>it had its tonong</i> From the skyworld from protection!

There is also the *Sikag a Makaombaw* amulet, owned by the goddess Walain Katolosan, which is regarded as the most powerful amulet of all due to its ability to grant its wielder authority over all tonong. The tonong within the amulet shows a high level of intelligence and

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 105.

independence. In the Kapmadali epic, when the amulet was about to be given to the disguised Madali instead of its initial recipient, the amulet alerts its goddess,

Maranao	English
Na sayana' pakaranon Ka pendaging so adimat A manaya sa tig iyan A ino ako paelada Ki Ladalad a Madali' A paegirigi sa bansa Sa Iliyan Bembaran. <sup>79</sup>	Instantly, something strange happened For the precious amulet spoke And this is what it was saying: “Why am I being handed to Prince Ladalad a Madali’ Who comes to defend the honor Of Iliyan a Bembaran?”

The favor and servitude offered by the tonongs to humans however is not unconditional. There are several conditions that a human must do to prevent a tonong's disapproval, or even worse may lead to the human's death. These conditions constitute the *four ways of doing good* which are: (1) honesty, (2) trustworthiness especially on oaths, (3) giving of what is due, or a concept similar to the *utang na loob*, and (4) faithfulness to good traditions and customs.

This is perhaps the reason why many characters in the Darangen swear in the tonong when swearing oaths, such was the case when the hero Bantogen wanted to clear a misunderstanding with his cousin Madali,

Maranao	English
A bosongen ako malab Ka tongayaon a tonong A romba a Ladan aken	“May I be <i>cursed to death</i> right now And <i>destroyed by all the tonongs</i> , I, myself, punished severely

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 192-193.

O ba ko ndawwalinga tig A romba a ladan ka. <sup>80</sup>	If ever I should fool you or Dare play a trick on you, yourself.”
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It is also the loss of the tonongs’ assistance which resulted in the defeat of the enchantress Walain Pirimbangan against Madali. Her transgression against the tonong are described in the following manner,

Maranao	English
Ka ino ka da’ makangen Sa kabaroraw sa tonong Ki Ladalad a Madali’ Ka kiyalabawan ka man A da’ den a natang ka Ko Inayonan o Kampong Sa Iligan a Bemberan. Ka ba ngka den piyanongkop Sa Palaw Ganding a Wato Ka ino di ngka katawan A isa bo’ sa ngganatan... <sup>81</sup>	“For this is why you could never Win in calling the tonongs over Prince Ladalad a Madali’, For you are ruthless in your ways, You had no pity for others, For Inayonan o Kampong Of Iliyan a Bemberan. Then instead of negotiating, You immediately imprisoned Him, forgetting that all of us Belong to the same family...”

A peculiar figure in Maranao folklore is the hero *Rajah Indarapatra*. It could be argued that he, the great ancestor of the Maranao royalty, may also be one of the heavenly tonong, at least initially prior to his incarnation on earth, although this is not made explicit possibly due to Islamization. He is described as a pre-existent Child from Heaven which the archangel Gabriel instructed to incarnate and become the mortal son of Sultan Nabi Bakaramat, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, and Putri Malailabangsa. He agreed to descend only if provided the

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 201.

following boons and treasures: (1) a horse that is faster than lightning and is smarter than man, (2) a golden bird that can shape-shift, (3) a pair of golden gongs that can involuntarily make a woman deliver when struck, (4) a magic kerchief that acts as a wish-granting device, (5) a *kudyapi*, (6) a magic boat, (7) and the boon of immortality and the ability to return to heaven whenever he wished.<sup>82</sup> Whether or not Rajah Indarapatra was initially a tonong prior to his conception may need further studies yet, the outline of his legends establish him as a pre-existent semi-divine spirit who took flesh yet retained most, if not all, of his spiritual abilities; the strangely familiar Christian ontology on the character of Indarapatra may just be a coincidence.

According to Maranao folklore, Rajah Indarapatra is the apo [ancestor] of both tonongs and Maranaos.<sup>83</sup> The proponent speculates that Rajah Indarapatra was once perhaps one of the tolos, perhaps the most famous, who later adapted Hindu elements, which in turn was later adopted in Folk Islamic Maranao beliefs.

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<sup>82</sup> Nagasura T. Madale, *Tales from Lake Lanao and other essays*, (Manila: National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 2001), 35-36.

<sup>83</sup> Nagasura Madale, "Myth, Symbolism, and National Unity: The Case of the Sarimanok," 159.

## Conclusion

Maranao Folk Islam is truly fascinating by the fact that it encompasses not only orthodox Islamic beliefs, but also an amalgamation of local animistic and Hindu elements. This reveals that Islam in the Philippines is not as purely orthodox as many would seem to imagine; rather they, similar to the Folk Catholic system of the Tagalogs and the Bisayans, had simply harmonized the foreign Islamic faith with the already existing local customs and legends. How did the Maranaos do so without providing a contradiction with Islam's notion of *Tahwid* or the Oneness of God while presenting the tonongs as also possessing ontological divinity?

This is not an easy question to answer given the sources reviewed by the proponent simply does not reveal much on this apparent ideological inconsistencies in contrast to the harmonization of the *diwatas* and the Christian pantheon in Folk Christianity. Folk Christians maintain both systems by downgrading the animistic elements and elevating the Christian ones. For example, there is an almost universal belief within the rural areas that the engkantos are actually fallen angels who fell on earth when Lucifer's rebellion failed.<sup>84</sup>

This transition of religious thought through mythological retellings is not, as far as current sources show, present in Maranao Folk Islam. It is only implied that the Islamized Maranaos thought of the tonong is only that as one of the unseen beings - along with angels and jinns - created by and ontologically inferior to God;<sup>85</sup> no other sources seem to specify the relationship between God and these native spirits. The proponent initially thought of the

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<sup>84</sup> The proponent was able to find attestations for this belief from informants from Bulacan and Quezon Province. Jocano also records such belief within the Hiligaynon of Panay island. See F. Landa Jocano, *The Hiligaynons: An Ethnography of Family and Community Life in Western Bisayan Region*, (Quezon City: Asian Center, 1983), 245-246.

<sup>85</sup> Nagasura Madale, *The Maranaws*, 53-54. See also Nagasura Madale, *Tales from Lake Lanao*, 91.

possibility that the Maranaos equated the tonongs with the Arabic jinns, yet folk attestations had already determined this as false given that these two beings are regarded as distinct from one another.

Another question comes to mind: how is Maranao Folk Islam coping in our contemporary period? A few months ago, the proponent and his peers were lucky enough to meet two ethnic Maranao women within the DLSU campus since they were selling local Maranao handicrafts such as kampilans, rattan containers, and sarimanok figures. During that time the proponent inquired regarding the present beliefs of Maranaos in spirits. The women answer that there may still be some that believes in the native spirits, but the majority no longer do so; in other words, the Maranao Folk Islam is slowly being abandoned in favor of Sunni Islam orthodoxy.

Madale recorded that the Maranaos, as of 2001, had halted from performing pre-Islamic practices such as the *kashawing* rice ritual, in which farmers would invoke the tonongs of Lanao Lake to come to the rice fields meanwhile presenting the spirits with food offerings wrapped in banana leaves. This ritual of course aimed for a bountiful harvest with the help of the benevolent tonongs. At the same time period, the latest instance that Madale recorded in which this ritual took place was simply a mock ritual for demonstrational purposes only. The farmers conducting the ritual even began with a prayer of protection from God that He may not harm them for conducting a ritual calling for other spirits.<sup>86</sup> Excerpts of the ritual invocation is as follows,

Praises to Allah! Pray that we will not commit sin in invoking the *tonong* of the lake. He created the *tonong* who are invoked when the farmer clears the field. We wish to invite *apo* Taraka, his children and children's children; *apo* Babowa, *apo* Mipesandalan of

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 93.

Masiu, his descendants from here to Maguindanao and Sulu; the *tonong* of the Four Sultanates of Lanao. All the *tonong* of Masiu we wish to invite today, Allah willing.

...Pray to Allah that we will not commit sin for invoking the *tonong* and for the things we say here. He created all *tonong* and gave them power. Pray to Allah that our offering will be materialized...

...We are calling you, *tonong* of Masiu, and all *tonong* of the Four Sultanates of Lanao, as well as the in-laws of the *tonong* of Masiu. We are inviting you today, Saturday, and offering you the food prepared by your descendants. In return, we ask you to pray to Allah so that all farmers will have a bountiful harvest. May the fishermen have a bountiful catch....We ask you to pray to Allah so that our crops will be safe from rats, worms and others.<sup>87</sup>

By this instance alone, it is evidenced that there is a contemporary attempt in separating Islamic practices with native animistic folk beliefs. See how the chanters emphasize the ontological subordination of the *tonong* to God. This signifies that there is, as Madale predicted, a growing consciousness within the Maranaos to truly purify the local practices and adhere to a fundamentalist Islamic mindset. The situation of Islam amongst the Maranaos is very similar to the primary Javanese movements of *Abangan* (Folk) and *Santri* (Fundamentalist) Muslims.<sup>88</sup> The former movement incorporates and syncretizes belief systems, folk philosophies, and rituals from local animist, Hindu-Buddhism, and Islam. The latter movement, on the other hand, aims for the purging of extra-Islamic beliefs and practices from Javanese Islam.

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<sup>87</sup> Juan R. Francisco, "Meaning and Perception: The religious experience of the Muslim Filipino," *Mindanao Journal* vol. 14, nos. 1-4 (1988): 183-184.

<sup>88</sup> See Clifford Geertz, *The religion in Java*, (New York: Free Press, 1964).



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